

Interview: Jacques Paul Klein, Principal Deputy High Representative"The Pale regime is losing authority"

Sometimes it is very difficult to follow Mr. Klein and the way he elaborates the political situation in BiH. Giving quick and precise answers, he diagnoses a problem and suggests a solution. The US General acts like he is on the battlefield even in politics – he draws conclusions after thorough preparations decreasing risks to the lowest degree possible.

You have heard about today's incident, the conflict between the police loyal to Plavsic and those loyal to Pale. According to information there was some shooting in which one policeman was wounded. What do you know about it?

I have not heard anything about shooting and injuring. All I know is that the incident did happen, and I am carefully watching the development of the situation on the ground. SFOR is on the ground and it is strongly keeping the situation under control. The IC will not allow blocking of traffic and roads. It acts in accordance with the DPA and will not allow any accidents.

National exploitation

How do you judge the situation in the RS?

I think that the Pale regime is losing power. More and more municipalities and police officials in the RS realise that they can be nationalists without stealing. Therefore, the fact that Plavsic pointed out robbers and corrupt people was well accepted by the population. The Serb people are fed up with leaders who lead them from one trouble to another and they need changes. I don't think that Plavsic is not a nationalist, but she has pointed out the real problems – those of an economic nature. The Pale regime is picking up a large amount of money from the people's sorrow and keeps strong control over that area.

Besides the police problems, what kind of problems do you encounter?

I think that the IC made a mistake by giving authority to the local leaderships to solve problems they cannot solve...

For example?

Currency, passports, flags, citizenship... the British government works on design for many currencies, for many countries, they design medals, flags... why would they not appear with their solution which no-one would like for sure, but which would be accepted because it does not insult anyone, and is acceptable for the ordinary people.

That means that we can expect such solutions soon?

First we will see what will happen, but we will not wait for forever. If things are not developing as we expect, and so far they have been developing very slowly, then I will visit the IC representatives and ask for a solution. We will reach a solution by compromise if we have to invite the IC, but the peace process will move much faster than is the case now. The first question I asked when I came here concerned the whole people here in rebuilding the country. I think that the last elections showed that will to a significant extent which is encouraging.

Election and implementation

Yes, but how should the results be implemented ?

Well, that will be hard. You see, I had the same problem in Vukovar. That was a Serb town with the Croatian mayor. My first task was the security, the second one – to solve the issue of what the Croatian mayor can do in the town with the Serb population only. Will they listen to him? How much they will be able to achieve, how they will achieve

it, and many other issues. All that needs a lot of money and good ideas in order to show the people that the person is available and can offer a better future. But, anyhow, the implementation of the election results is much more difficult than the election itself, and OSCE has prepared a special plan for that. Generally, we have to impose a special tactic. You should say: 'we expect you to do this', and to monitor the realisation. Do not say anything in advance, and especially, do not promise anything you don't believe or mean. You have to especially watch out for endless meetings.

Are these activities in accordance with the DPA?

No-one has ever told me that what I do is not in accordance with the DPA. Of course, there are differences. There are people who implement the DPA from its cornerstone, and I already think about its roof. It is necessary to open airports in Mostar, Tuzla, and Banja Luka during the next month. It is necessary to internationally and mutually recognise Belgrade and Sarajevo, and establish civil flights between these two towns... Those are practical moves needed for everybody, and not just political empty words.

You have mentioned relations with Yugoslavia. When can we expect those things you have mentioned to become the reality?

I think that Yugoslavia is ready for that. I have talked with President Milosevic recently, and he is willing to exchange ambassadors and open roads. I think that would be a large step forward that we can expect during the next month. But there is a problem that regard BiH charges against Yugoslavia before the Hague Tribunal. I think that Milosevic is willing to accept diplomatic and traffic relations regardless of the charges.

How sure can we be that this will happen after all those agreements that have signed so far?

I don't know that, but I am sure that I will persistently work on that. You see, I have already undertaken concrete steps and our people are in Belgrade are talking about the establishment of traffic between these two countries. As I have said, we need concrete moves, not empty talk. My experience from the Eastern Slavonija helps me a lot.

Changes to the DPA

How real are the requests and fears that can be heard even from some western sources that the DPA is changing, that is, that it should be changed completely? It is too early to talk about that. I think it is much better to wait and see what we can do and what possibilities the DPA offers. People who talk about changing the DPA actually did not even read that document. If you ask them what some of chapters contain they would not be able to tell you, because they simply do not know. Therefore, let us implement what we have here. The DPA, presently, does not have any alternative. Division of BiH into little national states is not either in Milosevic's or Tudjman's interest. If something like that happened we would face large problems and chaos. Therefore, if you would ask Milosevic or Tudjman about division of BiH you would get a negative answer. What we need here is not a division of the country, but the existence of one secular and democratic state. People here do their best and work a lot. This is a large potential supported by the IC. However, we need institutions that can help us on the ground. You cannot have a situation in which, for example, the train traffic does not function because a track drivers lobby corrupts someone in order not to let the train traffic work. You cannot expect more significant investments when we talk about corruption...

Do you have any proof regarding that or you only hard these stories?

What I am saying now is a public secret. Everybody knows what I am talking about.

In that sense, how ready is the IC to keep the military presence in BiH?

That presence will be needed in the future too, but it will decrease in numbers as the time passes. But the IC will stay here for a long time.

Investigation in Mostar

Another problem - the explosion in Mostar. What will the IC undertake in that regard?

We are already dealing with this problem and what I would like to see is the investigation team of the Federation police on the ground that will be monitored IPTF. Because we have international experts for that in IPTF. We have to find out who did that because of a number of accusations from both sides. It seems to me that the previous way that the investigation was conducted was wrong. Because when you investigate yourself you will use the best way possible to hide what you did. And what else can be concluded is based on the fact that you yourself are conducting the investigation and that some people from Croatia are helping you. The only way to change it is to bring the Federation police and IPTF. Finally, this is Federation territory and it is normal that the Federation police conduct the investigation. Even better if the Federation Ministry of Interior has the equipment to conduct it.

Bosnian Holbrooke

You sound rather decisive as well as hard. Is it a manifestation of some kind of BiH Holbrooke?

Holbrooke was a man who had hired me and gave me a task related to the Eastern Slavonija in November 1995. But one should never be hard if one does not think that way. Using the experience from Croatia, I have established a relation that I have never said something in Zagreb which I would not repeat in Belgrade, and other way around. And everybody knew that. Also I did not announce anything before good preparations. Otherwise, they would have prepared themselves and defeated me. The IC expects to move forward, and that is my task too.